A

FUNERAL ELEGY;

OR, AN

Elegiac Eſſay;

On the death of Miſs RHODA BAILEY, Daughter of Elder *Ebenezer Bailey*, of Weſtmorland, who died of the Small Pox, on the 14th day of May, 1797, in the 26th year of her age.

Compoſed by Elder EBENEZER BAILEY, *and read in his congregation, the firſt Sunday he attended meeting after he recovered from the ſmall-pox.*

MAN that is born of a woman, is of few days and full of trouble. Thus ſpake the man, whom God for wiſe purpoſes had loaded with deep afflictions. The Great Sovereign Diſpoſer of events has taught me both by obſervation and by bitter experience the truth of the above declaration. On April laſt, 21ſt day, a young girl whom I brought to my houſe thirteen days before, was taken ſick with a violent head-ache and burning fever. On the fourth day of her illneſs, at early morn, appeared a breaking out in her face of red pimples, which increaſed. Being at a loſs, we ſought to know, fearing the Small-Pox, what for certain it was; but were held in ſuſpenſe until the 6th day of her breaking out. Preſt with fear, we diſpatched a meſſenger, with winged ſpeed for an experienced Phyſician, to determine what the fatal engine was. The Doctor ſoon arrived, and certified it to be the contagious infection of the Small Pox! Like timorous birds caught in a ſnare, agitation ſhook our trem-

bling limbs : conflict filled our troubled minds ; shut up in a state of exile :—I thought it was fit we should tamely submit to the rod of God, on the principles of self preservation. We all inoculated, with foreboding fears of what fates would take place in the dismal operation :—Often looking one on another, being supported by the God of Mercies The sun rolled round the days, until the mortal infection, with malignant aim, fired the crimson blood, and raised its inflamation in our flesh—but he who directs the lightning under the whole Heaven, gave commission to the destroying angel to lift his sword, hoist the black flag, and spread around us the ensigns of death.

The tide of fear and grief now rose upon our hearts, as fast as the disease upon our bodies. My beloved daughter Rhoda, was the mark against whom the king of terrors made his aim ! O damping thought ! My pen fails to describe the terrible form in which the hardened foe dress himself with countenance hardened as adamant ; his breath like fiery flame : his covering dark as the black clouds that hover upon the summits of the mountains : his voice terrible as when a lion roareth ; his footsteps swift and violent as an eagle that hasteth to his prey—nothing could withstand the force of his execution.

The bitter moans of wounded parents, with all their prayers and supplications—the wounded hearts of brothers and sisters, with all their flowing tears—the friendly exertions of skilful physicians, urged on to motion by every tender feeling of sympathy to apply the best antidotes their knowledge could determine for the purpose to repel the force of the grand foe—the fond desire of lover and friends, were all unable to stop the fiery vengeance of the mighty conqueror ! He had commission to strike—he gave the fatal blow, and my dear daughter fell a prey to death ! Bereaved parents and afflicted children drowned in a flood of grief, their hearts resounded with groans and lamentations, until their strength was exhausted, and forbid their tears to flow. May the 14th she closed her eyes in death, and bid farewell to time ! To guard the public safety

From the infection, a workman was employed the night to make the coffin, that early the next morning the body might be committed to the grave, to reſt in its peaceful duſt. The ſteady ſun rolled on, and brought the morning light; the voice of heaven called to prepare to attend the ſolemnity of the day. The coffin was brought in early day; three or four who were guarded againſt the infection appeared to attend the ſolemn ſcene; the coffin was faſtened to the bier——I tried to raiſe a prayer to God, that his mercy might be granted to ſupport our ſinking ſpirits; fainting under a heavy weight of bitter ſorrows, while the languiſhing, afflicted mother (wan almoſt as the object ſhe mourned) and the dear afflicted children ſtood round the funeral bier, in all the bitterneſs of grief. The funeral helpers then lifted the corpſe, moved out of my dwelling, and made their direction towards the grave, while the mourning parents and weeping children made up the ſmall proceſſion of the funeral path. Not thought ſafe to go to the burying place, the grave was prepared in a ſouth direction, near the diſtant line of my own lands. The languiſhing mother, impaired with ſickneſs and ſorrow, walked from the houſe to the road; unable to proceed any further, ſhe ſtopped alone, while the weeping father and mourning children followed the bier to the cavern of the grave! O thou friendly angel, commiſſioned to guard the juſt, and to ſtrengthen and conſolate the weak, who are drowned in over much ſorrow, lend aſſiſtance to the ſorrowful matron, cruſhed like a bruiſed reed, under the weight of piercing ſorrows; bending her head towards the ground, yet ſtriving to lift her eyes, and follow with a look the little company of mourners to the funeral pile! Strengthen thou her, friendly meſſenger, with ſome conſolation, until we return from the grave of the dead and take her by the hand, mix our ſorrows, reſt in the dwelling of our exile, till God ſhall remove his rod, dry our tears and give us peace and reſt.

We interred the body of our departed daughter, then returned from the manſion of the dead, to our dwelling, where lonely, ſolitary and confined, our cup filled with ſor-

rowful meats and bitter waters, until the Lord has healed our ſickneſs, releaſed us from confinement; given us liberty to aſſemble with the congregation of the people this day, and pay our vows in the Courts of the Lord.

BUT O! a thought of reflection raiſes a new torrent of grief, burſting forth from my troubled breaſt! my beloved daughter where is ſhe? She is not here! Her ſeat is empty! She can no more be a worſhipper in the houſe below; her body lies in yonder grave; her ſoul has winged to the eternal world; ſhe muſt reſt in her peaceful duſt, until yonder ſun is hurled from its orbit—the caverns of earth groan to the centre—pillars of marble diſſolve in the laſt general burning, and the trump of God awakes the ſleeping dead! Solemn as my grief—as ſolemn is the thought!

O YE kindred of human nature! your feelings muſt kindle into motion while you behold me the ſpectacle of grief. I would not offend the Almighty by any frantic diſorder, but I cannot help weeping for my daughter. A child who had been endeared to the hearts of her parents, by conſtant perſeverance in a life of duty and filial love. I never had occaſion to ſtrike her a blow with the rod of correction, from her infancy to her dying hour. She never diſobeyed my commandment: She was always an unwearied ſuccourer of the family, in all the troubles of life. When injured at any time, would not fret as others, but would grieve and be wounded. She was almoſt a ſingle inſtance in human nature of patience to bear pain and affliction even unto death. She was lovely and pleaſant in her life, but her death bitter, and in its form terrible. When the ſolemn harbinger of death laid its hand upon her, it ſtripped her of every delicate feature, changed her viſage into deformity, and turned her fleſh as black as the ſoot of the chimney—her ſtrength immediately decayed, the ſilver cord was looſed, the golden bowl was broken, the pitcher at the fountain became a broken veſſel, the ſprings of life ceaſed their motion, ſhe fell among the ſlain—ſhe is gone! My heart mourns for my daughter,

while my thoughts track more ſcenes of trouble that I have paſſed, than can be told, or are ſuitable for me to try to name.

For my ſoul's trial, the Lord in his ſovereignty denied me the ſatisfaction of hearing her expreſs her ſoul in light and liberty: Her mind was under clouds; the laſt words ſhe ſaid to me, that I remember, in a faultering voice, were "If the Lord give quietneſs who can make trouble; if he hides his face, who can behold him, whether it be done againſt a nation, or againſt a man only?" But I had hope in her death; and conclude her ſoul is among the happy. I can calmly reſt the great affair with that God whoſe tender mercies are over all his works.

If any of the rude and profane world, ſhould take occaſion to ridicule the folly of my performance, in what I have exhibited; or if any of my friends ſhould be ſorry that I have expoſed my weakneſs to the world, I would obſerve, that the impreſſion of the rod of God upon me, and the deſire that it may be a little ſpark to kindle in the mind of ſome one or more, a ſenſe of death and the eternal world, carries me beyond being damped in the leaſt with either.

Have pity upon me, O my friends, have pity upon me, for the hand of God has touched me. The Lord has come upon me like the wide breaking in of waters. God has numbered my lot among thoſe who are ready to raiſe up their mourning. God has numbered me with thoſe where grief and ſorrow and mourning print their image in open form. His ſovereign hand hath done it! Holy and Reverend is his Name!

O thou liſtening Congregation, whoſe ears are hearkening to the voice of lamentation; give attention a moment to matters that concern your higheſt good; and let me addreſs you with a mind tender as the dew of the morning, with all the affection of a brother and a friend.

And First—I addreſs you lovely young women, who are in the bloom of youth; your countenances bluſh like the roſe of the morning; lend your thoughts a moment; think how quick the deſpoiler death may change your lovely form. Could I print in your minds the image of Death, in the terrible form I have ſeen of late, methinks it would give a daſh to all your vanity, therefore conſider the neceſſity, the importance of your embracing ſalvation now. Repent, O repent of your ſins, fly to the arms of Jeſus for ſhelter—make your reſt on him as the anchor of your hope, and then you will be ſafe; elſe if you refuſe his grace, when death ſhall ſtretch out his cold hand, and lay it on you, the curtain of horror, will then cover your ſoul; ſin, then will ſting like a ſerpent, & bite like an adder. Therefore, hearken to ſin no longer, but make the Lord your portion.

I turn to you young men, whoſe ſtrength is like braſs, and nerves quick as the lightning, come now be ſober minded—acquaint now yourſelves with God, and be at peace, thereby good ſhall come unto you. If you ſpend your youthful ſtrength in ſin, you will make hard work for yourſelves. Therefore, hearken now in the day of God's viſitation, believe on the Lord Jeſus, forſake the vanities of the preſent generation, walk in the path of religion, give no more of your youthful days to ſin & vanity, repent while the door of mercy is open, accept of pardon while the golden ſceptre is held out to you. You will all find it to your advantage in a dying hour!——O young men, hear inſtruction—refuſe it not.

I now turn to you, parents of children. God has made you inſtruments of bringing children into the world; they are under your guardian care, as their natural parents—What are your thoughts about your children? What are your examples before them? What inſtructions and admonitions do you give them? Are their bodies all you care for, while you neglect their ſouls? You muſt have to give an account in this matter; your conſciences can make application better than words.

I TURN my eyes on my aged fathers and mothers, whose grey locks indicate them near the port of the grave. Are you ready, venerable parents, to take your voyage through death? Does your faith view with eager expectation, grounded on good evidence, the interesting prospect beyond the grave? See to it, your sheaves are full, and patiently wait the coming of your Lord.

I NOW with heart melting like the liquid waters, embrace the professing church of God. My brethren, what dress, in your christian profession, do you find yourselves in? Are you in constant perseverance in the love of God, or are you backsliders? Are you enjoying the consolation of the Holy Spirit, or are you clouded with guilt and darkness? What is the bent of your affections? Have we forgotten Zion and given our hearts to the world? O solemn plunge! the Lord has found us out in our iniquity, we have fell under the rod of his hand—awake my brethren, the bridegroom cometh, arise and trim your lamps.

TO the attending congregation, one and all. Your souls are equally precious; O prepare to meet your Judge—think a moment that death draws nigh; the judgment will quickly set; How can you endure when the rocks shall rend, the mountains quake, and the blue heavens shall be wrapt together as a scroll, the Judge erect his tribunal and summon all the human congregation to his bar, to answer trial? Shelter, dear Jesus, shelter my soul from being cast on the left hand of the Judge! Dreadful tho't! that any should miss the wished for approbation!——I pause for a thought of reflection.———

PERMIT me to observe to you all, whether friends or enemies, not to look upon me as a spectacle of despair, tho tost on the wave of trouble. I hope in God. Let me turn my thoughts and forget my sorrows awhile. Awake, my muse and pursue objects that will bring consolation—let my faith and hope take a bolder flight, and try to look thro' the cloud. But O!

" Virtue lags with heavy wheel;
Faith has wings but cannot rise,
Cannot rise swift and high,
As the winged numbers fly,
And faint devotion panting lies,
Half way the ætherial hill."

BUT may not I hope, may not I believe, that when I have paſſed a few toils more, and drank the remains of my cup of ſorrows; after I have tried to ſpread abroad my Redeemer's praiſe, and fulfilled the miniſtry committed to my truſt, and I receive a ſummons to leave this houſe of clay, that ſome friendly angel will eſcort me in at the heavenly portals, where I ſhall bow before the throne, and that the dear, afflicted mother, the companion with me in tribulation, together with the children, thoſe who are gone before, and thoſe who follow after, together with all, thoſe who have been awakened by my feeble miniſtry, may be gathered home to the manſion houſe above, where with humble acclamation I may ſay, Lord, here am I and the children whom thou haſt given me; where we may all bow with humble, proſtrate adoration before the throne, and be eternally delighted in talking and telling over the pleaſing ſtory of the Redeemer's boundleſs love and grace. AMEN.

FINIS.

10 OC 67